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SWM SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
PROGRAMME

INNOVATION CASE STUDY

NOVEL APPROACHES FOR ENGAGING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON WILDLIFE AND FOOD SECURITY

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Background

Indigenous Peoples and many local communities consider nature an intrinsic part of their cultures and way of life, and they rely on wild plants and wild animals for food, medicines and income. Indigenous Peoples manage over a quarter of the world's land surface, including some of the most ecologically intact areas. They are the custodians of much of the remaining biodiversity.

However, with human population growth, increasing interconnectedness with urban areas and regional markets, the conservation and sustainable use of many natural habitats and wildlife populations are under threat. Indigenous Peoples and many local communities have long been sidelined in decisions about their own lands and resources. Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and to govern access to, and use of, natural resources within their traditionally owned, occupied or used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas have been, and in places continue to be, abrogated by more powerful actors.

The SWM Programme is working to improve rural governance systems, so that communities are in a better position to sustainably manage their natural resources and improve their well-being. Making this happen isn't simple. It requires accountable and transparent systems that empower communities to govern their territories effectively. It's about building real partnerships based on trust and mutual respect. It means listening to the needs and ideas of the people who call these places home and working together to find solutions that benefit everyone. It's about recognizing that communities are the true stewards of their lands and resources and supporting them in their efforts to protect and sustainably manage these vital natural assets.

Community engagement is a two-way process of exchange and dialogue between project staff and all segments of the communities, which involves a wide spectrum of established approaches and good practices. In addition to the innovative examples described further on, the SWM Programme has used several tools to engage with communities and create a safe space for dialogue. The use of games is one of them, as described in the issue of this Innovation in Practice series dedicated to games.

For the SWM Programme, community engagement aims to empower all social groups and social networks, and build upon local strengths and capacities. This case study highlights some of the innovative ways in which the initiative is helping improve local participation, decision making and ownership in ongoing efforts to achieve fair, equitable and lasting sustainable wildlife management.

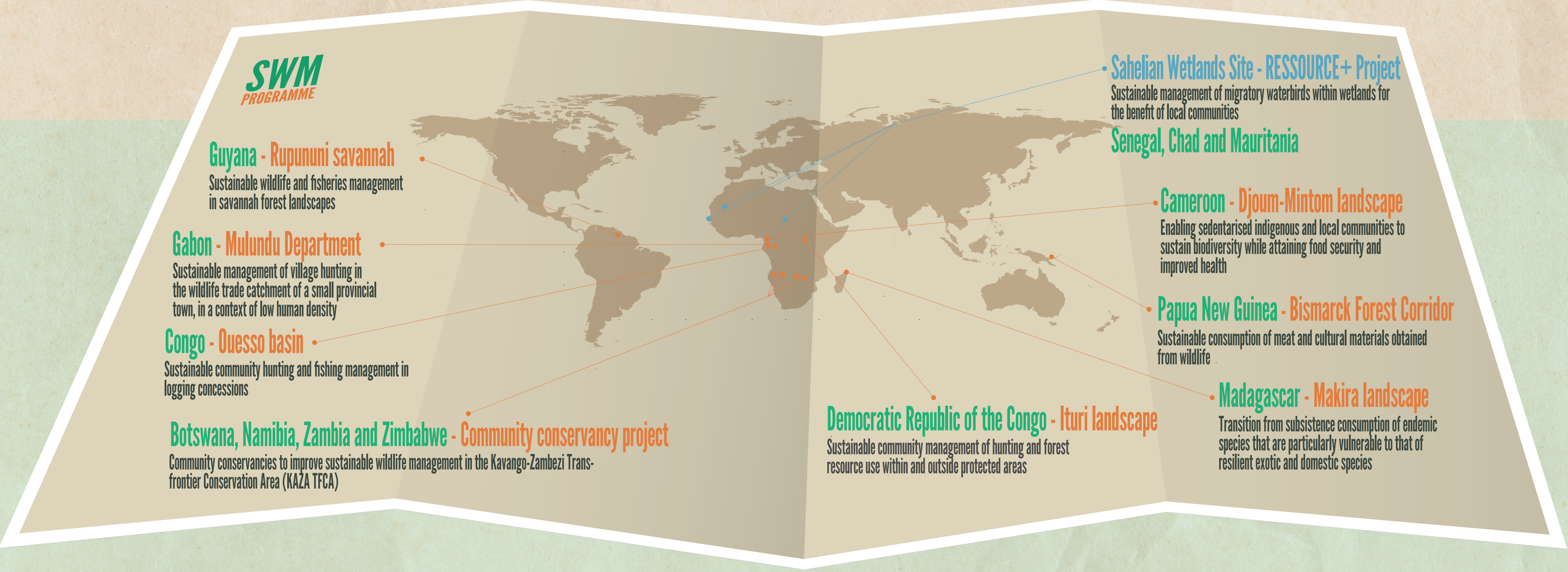
INNOVATION

The Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme is a global initiative that aims to improve the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife in forest, savannah, and wetland ecosystems. To achieve this goal, SWM Programme teams work in close partnership with governments and over 80 local communities in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific to develop novel approaches and innovative solutions.

For the SWM Programme, "innovation consists of doing something new and different, whether solving an old problem in a new way, addressing a new problem with a proven solution, or bringing a new solution to a new problem". (United Nations Innovation Network, 2019).

This case study is not just a stand-alone success story; it is part of an Innovation in Practice series, which encompasses a variety of technical, social, legal and institutional innovations. The series includes new ideas as well as improvements to existing ones, making good practices even better.

We hope that the SWM Programme Innovation in Practice series will spark new ways of working to strengthen community-based sustainable wildlife management worldwide. Please share this case study to help build a brighter future for both people and wildlife.



Guyana - Rupununi savannah
Sustainable wildlife and fisheries management in savannah forest landscapes

Gabon - Mulundu Department
Sustainable management of village hunting in the wildlife trade catchment of a small provincial town, in a context of low human density

Congo - Ouesso basin
Sustainable community hunting and fishing management in logging concessions

Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe - Community conservancy project
Community conservancies to improve sustainable wildlife management in the Kavango-Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA)

Sahelian Wetlands Site - RESSOURCE+ Project
Sustainable management of migratory waterbirds within wetlands for the benefit of local communities
Senegal, Chad and Mauritania

Cameroon - Djoum-Mintom landscape
Enabling sedentarised indigenous and local communities to sustain biodiversity while attaining food security and improved health

Papua New Guinea - Bismarck Forest Corridor
Sustainable consumption of meat and cultural materials obtained from wildlife

Madagascar - Makira landscape
Transition from subsistence consumption of endemic species that are particularly vulnerable to that of resilient exotic and domestic species

Democratic Republic of the Congo - Ituri landscape
Sustainable community management of hunting and forest resource use within and outside protected areas

United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. [Cited 9 September 2024]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420/download? token=TUP4yDmF

The Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme, which currently works with over 80 communities in 15 countries, advocates a community rights-based approach, which respects, upholds and strengthens the rights of communities.

PROGRAMME
DE GESTION DURABLE
DE LA FAUNE SAUVAGE
SWM PROGRAMME

SWM Programme approach to community engagement

The SWM Programme prioritizes people's rights in wildlife management, aiming to balance conservation needs with wildlife use for food security and cultural practices. The initiative has created a community rights-based approach, which identifies governments, institutions and civil society as accountable duty-bearers for respecting and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It also focuses on empowering these communities, as rights-holders, to exercise and claim their rights. To this end, the SWM Programme has strengthened the community rights-based approach by developing a series of social safeguards tools, which are being systematically used, adapted and documented in diverse settings. Such a standardized approach is particularly new for multi-partner, multi-country conservation initiatives and is encouraging similar approaches in other projects.

The primary purpose of social safeguards is for external actors to comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to be accountable to the communities they seek to work with, and are working with, and to prevent or redress rights abuses. However, our obligation to implement credible social safeguards to protect the rights of community partners also translates into an important and desired way to enhance community engagement. Proof of this is that the SWM Programme applies social

SWM Programme team members at a community fishing camp in Kabo, Republic of the Congo.
© Brent Stirton/Getty Images for FAO, CIRAD, CIFOR-ICRAF, WCS

safeguards tools to all partner communities and all social groups within them, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups, well beyond the UNDRIP recommendations which concern Indigenous Peoples. This is an innovative aspect of the initiative, which has managed to convert an obligation into an asset for the promotion of community rights through the categories of inclusion, intercommunity dialogue, recognition, transparency, collaboration and empowerment. The SWM Programme approach to community engagement is articulated around three major ethical areas of intervention, which are shown in Figure 1:

1. **Social inclusion:** Social inclusion ensures that all community members, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the SWM Programme activities. The Programme promotes equality and non-discrimination, focusing on the full participation and agency of Indigenous Peoples, youth and women. Gender equality and women's empowerment are central, ensuring the needs and contributions of both women and men are valued. The SWM Programme gender six-step approach includes gender analyses, collecting sex-disaggregated data, training, income-generating activities for women where appropriate, formulating gender indicators, and documenting best practices.

Sokajim-bibidia

2. **Community-driven approach:** At all the participating field sites, the focus is on community-led sustainable wildlife management models. The SWM Programme champions a participatory approach, actively involving marginalized community members in every stage of project planning, design, implementation and monitoring. This inclusive strategy ensures their voices are heard and priorities addressed. Key activities include participatory stakeholder mapping and analysis, consultation meetings and mutual agreements following an iterative ongoing Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. FPIC creates agency and enacts self-determination for Indigenous Peoples and partner communities to approve or reject projects that impact their lands and resources. While it is an obligation that responds to the guidelines of international law, this transparent process fosters mutual agreements on project activities, maintains ongoing community engagement, and allows consent to be withdrawn at any stage. FPIC is a continuous dialogue, enabling communities to shape project conditions throughout its duration.
3. **Feedback and co-learning:** The SWM Programme feedback mechanisms enable two-way communication, building trust and collaboration by listening to community needs and incorporating their input. This co-learning approach helps adapt project plans to local contexts. A key feedback tool is the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), which allows communities to not only anonymously raise concerns about violations of rights or project standards but also simply make suggestions. The GRM is conceived to ensure culturally appropriate, transparent and timely resolutions of complaints and protection of rights, but similarly to the FPIC within the SWM Programme, it has proven to be a very powerful tool for engaging communities, empowering all social groups to make their voices heard, contributing to the promotion of transparency within communities and the culture of accountability about services delivered by public servants and duty-bearers. It is a non-judicial system that helps to counterbalance the powers and this is perhaps the most innovative aspect of an instrument that was originally conceived of as a social safeguards tool. This mechanism has been or is being established at all project sites, using a variety of approaches including suggestion boxes, hotlines and electronic platforms.

The SWM Programme team in Madagascar has developed community games to raise awareness about which wild species are protected and whether they can be hunted or not.
© WCS/François Sandrin

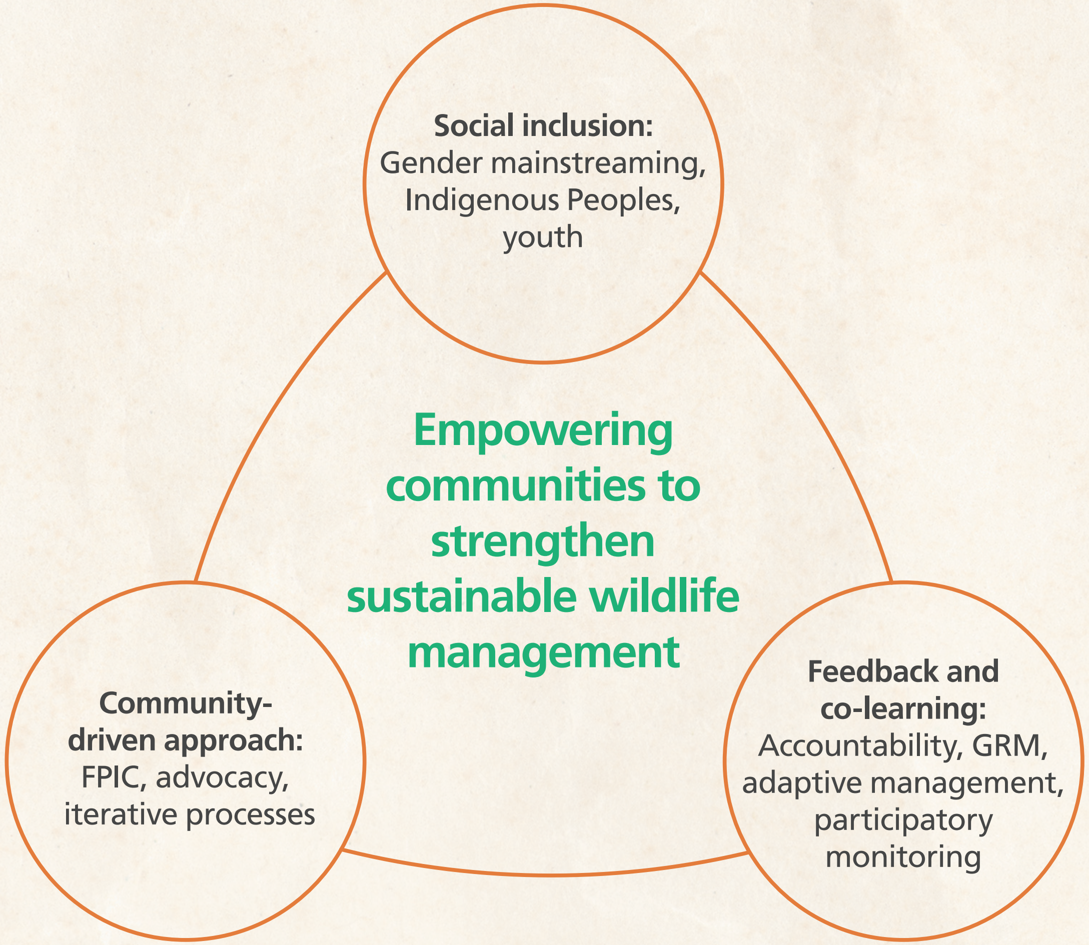

Social inclusion:
Gender mainstreaming, Indigenous Peoples, youth
Empowering communities to strengthen sustainable wildlife management
Community-driven approach:
FPIC, advocacy, iterative processes
Feedback and co-learning:
Accountability, GRM, adaptive management, participatory monitoring

Figure 1: SWM Programme triangular community engagement innovation approach.

EXAMPLE

Developing national guidelines for FPIC monitoring and evaluation in the Republic of the Congo

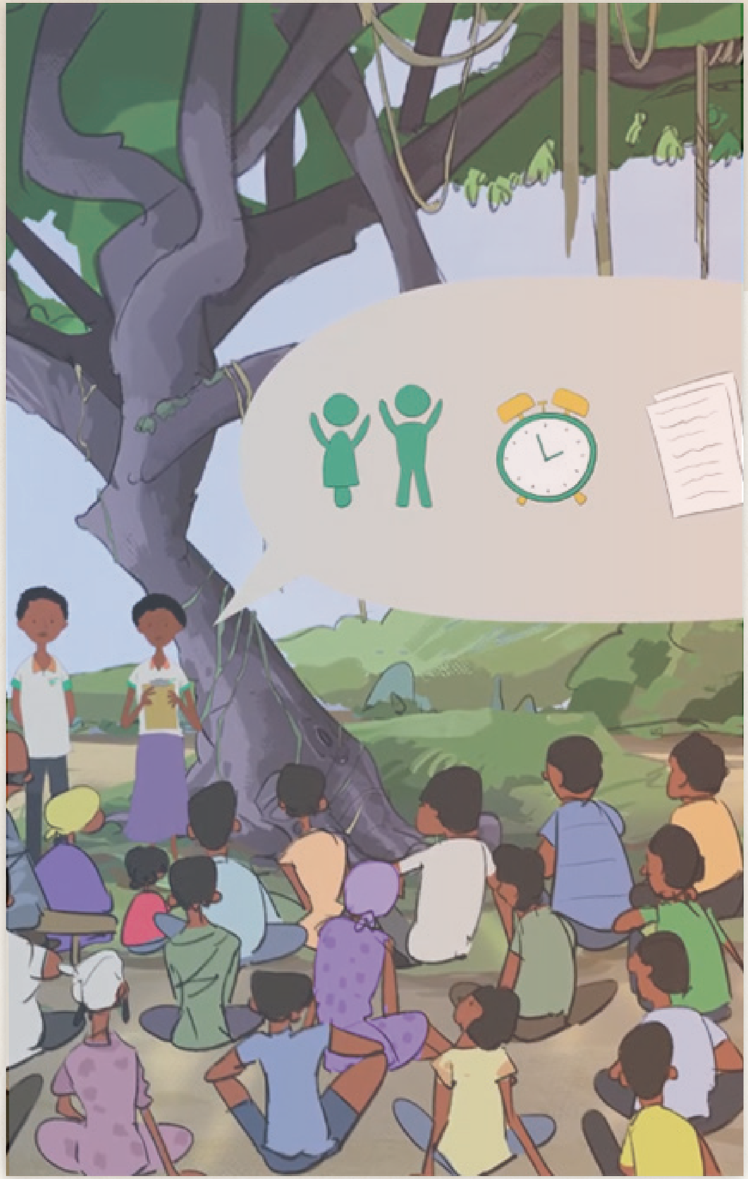
In the Republic of the Congo, Decree No. 2019-201 of July 12, 2019 establishes the procedures for the implementation of FPIC processes, in accordance with article 3 of Law No. 5-2011 of February 25, 2011, on the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Republic of the Congo. Following the publication of the 2019 decree, the FPIC process implemented by the SWM Programme in Congo was the first approved in the country by an ad hoc government commission established for this purpose. This recognition laid the foundation for institutional collaboration and today the SWM Programme is supporting the government in the development of national guidelines that will regulate FPIC monitoring and evaluation processes throughout the country.

Empowering stories: the journey of Alex, Leo and Barbara

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is complex and difficult to explain in an engaging way. The SWM Programme also recognized that field staff need an interesting and standardized tool to kick-start discussions with communities, which could be used consistently by different staff in different countries. Given the many different environments, types of projects and communities at the field sites, the approach also needed to be flexible to cater to a wide variety of contexts.

Storytelling is a powerful and memorable way of starting conversations. This was the starting point for the innovation. Several brainstorming virtual meetings were organized with representatives from Southern Africa, the Congo Basin, Madagascar, Guyana and Papua New Guinea partner teams to discuss possible stories and characters that could lead viewers on an FPIC journey. The story and characters needed to resonate in all these countries and regions. Out of these discussions the young and dynamic characters Alex, Leo and Barbara emerged.

An animation studio in South Africa, which works on many African development projects, was then brought in to develop a storyboard, the visuals, narrations and the final animation. The draft designs were shared with communities and community liaison officers during the production to refine these elements. A final draft was piloted through the four SWM Programme partners, refined and then launched in 2021. The animation was initially produced in English and French, and then local language versions were created in Lingala, Swahili, Tonga, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety and Lozi.



This engaging SWM Programme animation tells the story of Leo, Alex and Barbara, and explains in a clear and visual way how to engage and involve local communities through a Free, Prior and Informed Consent process.

To complement the video, and to create a storytelling ecosystem around the characters, a series of four posters were produced in tandem to present each of the four elements:

- **Free:** English, French, Swahili, Tonga, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Lozi
- **Prior:** English, French, Swahili ,Tonga, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Lozi
- **Informed:** English, French, Swahili ,Tonga, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Lozi
- **Consent:** English, French, Swahili ,Tonga, Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Lozi

Following the success, a second animation was produced, using the same characters, to continue their story, but this time to explain what is meant by community-based sustainable wildlife management in an engaging way.

The animation has been used repeatedly by SWM Programme community liaison officers to stimulate discussions about FPIC with communities and empower communities to decide what types of projects and support they need to improve sustainable wildlife management. The experience has shown how interesting and appropriate stories can be used to support engagement, and the importance of preparing all materials in local languages.

Community film night in Ambalamahogo village, Madagascar, featuring a screening and discussion of the SWM Programme's animation on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.
© FAO/Rijasolo

> "Our communities benefited greatly from the video animation and posters, which we produced in Tonga, our local language. The animated video really helped them understand the complexities of FPIC in a clear way. Everyone loves stories, so this helped kick-start discussions about the community being empowered to decide whether they wanted projects or not."
>
> Martha Katsi,
> Communication and Engagement Officer, Zimbabwe,
> SWM Programme

FIND OUT MORE

WCS Free, Prior and Informed Consent brochure
English

WCS Free, Prior and Informed Consent brochure
French

Animation on community-based sustainable wildlife management
English

Animation on community-based sustainable wildlife management
French

> "They learned about the consequences of overharvesting animals and the importance of leaving turtles alone during the breeding season. They really enjoyed it. They were laughing a lot and that is always a good sign!"
>
> Alyssa Melville,
> Environmental Education Coordinator for the SRCS, Guyana

Strengthening Indigenous Peoples' voices: A new community-led consent process in Guyana

VENEZUELA
GUYANA
SURINAME
BRAZIL

United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. [Cited 9 September 2024]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420

In 2006, the Amerindian Act granted Indigenous Peoples (referred to as Amerindian villages and Amerindian communities in the Act) in Guyana the right to consent for specific activities on their formally recognized territories. However, this right was limited to small- and medium-scale mining, logging, and the establishment of protected areas. The Act does not recognize FPIC rights for communities on untitled land and does not cover development and conservation projects, research activities, or other activities that may have positive or negative impacts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Without written rules and procedures, communities are struggling to defend their rights over land and other resources they have traditionally used and occupied. Indeed, it is external actors who tend to define the terms of engagement and consultations.

The SWM Programme in Guyana has been supporting an innovative community-led initiative aimed at expanding and strengthening the existing consent policies, focusing on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including those on untitled lands. This is aligned with the SWM Programme objectives to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The SWM Programme began raising awareness among Indigenous Peoples' leaders (Toshaos) and community members about their FPIC rights under the UNDRIP since 2018. The team then began working with communities that had already secured formal land

Community members from Nappi village in the Rupununi region, Guyana, participate in a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent workshop focused on building skills in negotiation and decision-making.
© CIFOR-ICRAF/Michelle Kenyon

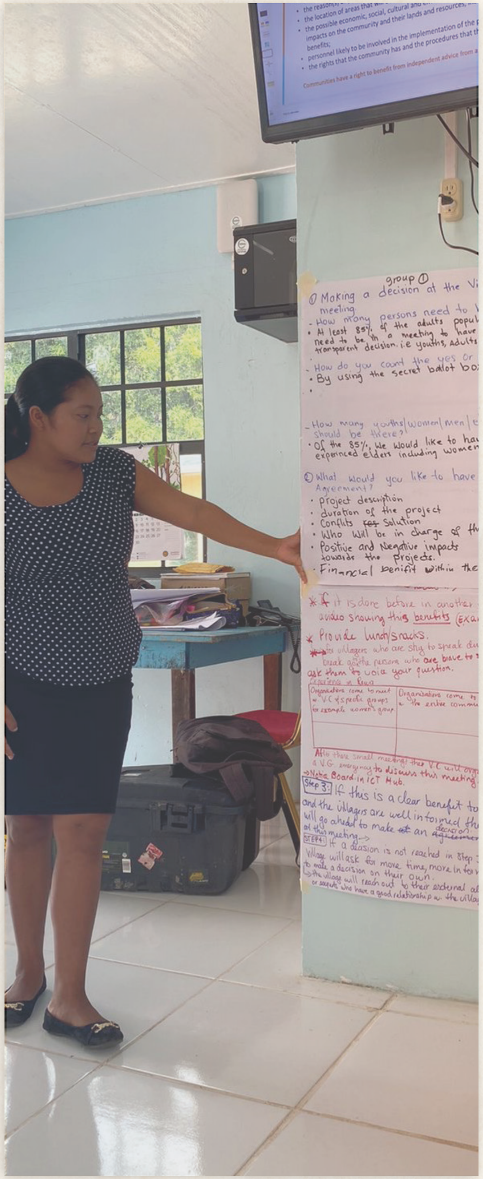
tenure from the government and where their community council was recognized by, and authorized to, govern access to and use of their territory. The Toshaos recognized the value of having their own consent process and protocols to engage with external individuals or organizations seeking access to community lands. This kick-started efforts with the SWM Programme to create tailor-made community FPIC guidelines that build on the Amerindian Act and international law.

This initiative is unique in Guyana because it adopts a bottom-up approach, supporting Indigenous People's agency to take the lead in defining and managing their own written FPIC processes. The indigenous leaders' enthusiasm for FPIC highlighted its potential beyond only formal engagements with external entities, envisioning it as a tool for broader community development and resource management.

To develop comprehensive FPIC protocols, in 2023 the SWM Programme facilitated a series of multi-day training sessions with Toshaos and community members, focusing on the implications of a consent process, defining the situations where FPIC would be requested by the community and clarifying the FPIC steps. These sessions led to in-depth discussions and clarification on the specific roles and responsibilities of community members and the obligations of external parties were clearly defined. The whole process has had multiple benefits.

- **Community empowerment:** The training and subsequent discussions empowered community leaders and members to take an active role in managing their territories.
- **Protocol Development:** Five Amerindian villages (Mocomoco, Nappi, Rewa, Surama and Yupukari), with guidance from the SWM Programme team, developed protocols to standardize FPIC processes, ensuring clarity and consistency in engagements with external entities.
- **Capacity Building:** Strengthening the capacity of community leaders and members has positioned them to lead future FPIC processes, safeguarding their rights to self-determination and territorial governance.

> "Having our own FPIC protocols will help us to improve our relationships with our partners to have a better process in place...to show them what we require in terms of communication."
>
> Toshao Dicky Alvin



Community workshops offered a valuable opportunity for residents to come together and develop Free, Prior, and Informed Consent protocols.
© CIFOR-ICRAF/Michelle Kenyon

The protocols developed by these Indigenous Peoples will serve as a blueprint for others across Guyana and in the wider region. This toolkit will enable other communities to create their own FPIC processes, tailored to their specific needs and circumstances, thereby promoting widespread adoption and empowerment.

At previous National Toshao Council meetings, Indigenous leaders from the Rupununi explained how they are developing their FPIC protocols in their communities in Region 9 (Rupununi). They will present their FPIC protocols at the next National Toshao Council in order to gain official recognition and support for their efforts. This official recognition will provide Amerindian villages with a stronger foundation for negotiating with external actors and government agencies. It will also serve as a model for other Amerindian communities in Guyana that are seeking to further protect their land and resources through the FPIC process by developing their own FPIC protocol.

> "Without FPIC, without our consent, no one is to force us to say yes to a project that is being proposed. FPIC helps to bring our community together, to understand together and to take part together."
>
> Former Toshao Rudy Edwards
> and Committee member of
> the Rewa Fishery Committee

FIND OUT MORE

The Amerindian Act No. 6 of 2006

English

SWM Programme Guyana legal posters for Amerindian communities **English** and Amerindian villagers **English**

Community members in Nappi village gathered at the meeting hall to create protocols for standardizing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent processes, with support from the SWM Programme.
© CIFOR-ICRAF/Michelle Kenyon

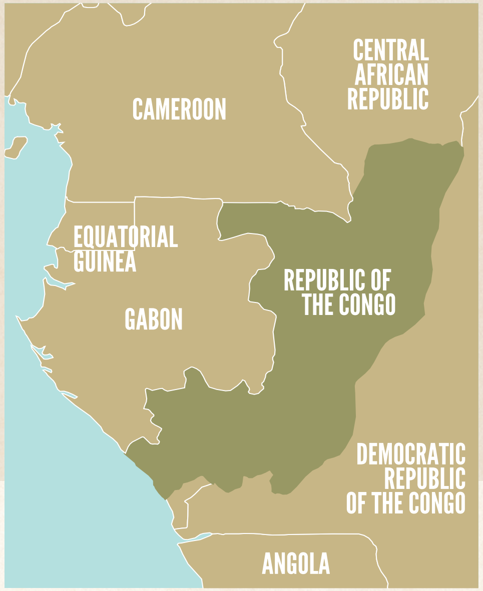
Working with women and Indigenous Peoples to ensure equity and social inclusion in the Republic of the Congo

Rural women are often marginalized and denied access to land and forest rights, use of and control over natural resources and decision-making processes. Yet they are at the heart of rural communities, as they provide food and care for households, and can also influence how their communities hunt, fish and manage water.

In the Republic of the Congo, for example, the SWM Programme **gender analysis** revealed important information about the role of women in the wild meat value chain. The assessment, which combined national data and field information collected by the SWM Programme team, showed that in the Kabo District, most bushmeat sellers are female as are wholesalers, importers, exporters and restaurateurs. The findings of this gender assessment translated into a concerted effort to address the underrepresentation of women in conservation and community decision making.

An important stride was the inclusion of two women as managers of finance and logistics in the Kabo-Gbabali hunting management association, which comprises nine members.

Additionally, the programme's diversity and inclusion approach extends to Indigenous Peoples. The SWM Programme worked with the local community to include a Baka representative in the association, which primarily consists of Bantus.



United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. [Cited 9 September 2024]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420

> "Though their initial roles were less prominent, their presence is a crucial first step towards equitable participation in governance. This process involved community-led elections, guided by the SWM Programme's promotion of female leadership."
>
> Grace Elodie Ollomo,
> SWM Programme social safeguards specialist, Congo

The gender analysis conducted by the SWM Programme in Kabo District, Republic of the Congo, highlighted the central role that women play in the wild meat value chain
© FAO/Cindy Côté-Andreetti

This collaboration between the Bantus and the Bakas marks a significant advancement in bridging historical and cultural divisions, fostering social cohesion and collaboration within the community, particularly in addressing wildlife management issues, which have not traditionally been approached inclusively in the region.

This gender, diversity and inclusion approach is pioneering, marking the fact that for the first time a gender analysis-guided conservation effort in the Ouesso region champions at the same time inclusivity of Indigenous Peoples and encourages cultural integration and equitable participation.

The field team has been interacting with communities on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. This has allowed the team to understand and interact with communities, incorporate new ideas, and adapt project activities according to community needs and priorities. As part of the SWM Programme's gender, diversity and inclusion approach, all activities, including the setting up of the community hunting association, encourage equitable participation of all community members. This allowed the progressive understanding of problems, issues and needs surrounding the hunting management around the village of Kabo-Gbabali.

> "The income generated by poultry farming really helps the family, especially when my husband isn't working. The sale of chickens allows the animals in the forest to continue to grow and multiply in their natural habitat."
>
> Audrey Bokandzé, poultry farmer in Kabo village

The election and involvement of women and Bakas in governance meetings has allowed their voices to be amplified and brought attention to gender and Indigenous Peoples' issues, igniting greater awareness and discussion. It has also encouraged their involvement in other aspects of community engagement, particularly in the realm of economic empowerment as stated in the association's constitution.

Women's involvement and participation in income-generating activities has surged, contributing to improved household finances and heightened economic independence. In this regard, the SWM Programme collaborates with other initiatives such as a microbusiness project funded by other international donors. Specifically, out of 619 households involved in both initiatives, 364 (59 percent) are led by women, showcasing their substantial participation in various income-generating ventures. Additionally, 121 households (20 percent) include members of Indigenous Peoples.

Despite these positive developments, challenges persist, including navigating complex cultural dynamics and stereotypes, balancing domestic responsibilities, and enhancing staff capacity. Addressing these challenges will be essential to ensuring the ownership and sustainability of the SWM Programme's interventions.

Plans for greater awareness campaigns, alongside targeted capacity-building efforts, aim to bolster women's leadership and deepen women's and Baka integration across decision-making levels. By nurturing inclusivity and equity, the programme aspires to redefine conservation and community empowerment paradigms, ensuring lasting impact and sustainability.

FIND OUT MORE

Congo social safeguards factsheet

French

European Union Capacity4dev "Empowering rural women to achieve sustainable wildlife management"

English

The SWM Programme has greatly enhanced women's participation in income-generating activities, leading to improved financial stability and greater economic independence.
© FAO/Cindy Côté-Andreetti

Engaging community concerns in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. [Cited 9 September 2024]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420

The SWM Programme works in the remote Ituri forest region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Field staff have identified distinct challenges within these communities, where illiteracy is common and there is poor access to some basic necessities. Moreover, there is limited trust in governmental and civil society institutions and within communities.

The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) came about through prolonged discussions with four communities within or bordering the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (OWR), where community members actively participated in co-designing the procedures for submitting grievances and the process for investigating and resolving them. Notably, the communities advocated for a mechanism that allows them not only to submit complaints but also to ask questions, seek additional information and offer suggestions.

The SWM Programme, through the Wildlife Conservation Society, mobilized resources to ensure the effective implementation of the GRM. Together with project staff, communities decided on various channels for submitting grievances and suggestions. These included suggestion boxes within each community, direct conversations with Okapi Wildlife Reserve personnel or the community GRM focal point, email, phone calls or SMS, traditional letters, and a toll-free hotline.

A functional GRM is now in place in the OWR. It constitutes an important pilot initiative that has not only served as a model for other GRMs in additional communities within the

Community members practice submitting a complaint as part of the Grievance Redress Mechanism. The Democratic Republic of the Congo.
© WCS/Benjamin Mbusa

reserve, but has also inspired the national government's "Guide standard du Mécanisme de Gestion des Plaintes (MGP) dans les aires protégées de la République Démocratique du Congo" (ICCN 2022), with whose standards it is compliant. A unique and definitely innovative feature of the GRM implemented by the SWM Programme is the fact that, in addition to being a valid mechanism for the collection and resolution of grievances, it has also translated into a powerful tool for resolving intra- and inter-community conflicts, stimulating dialogue and discussions, also on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and ultimately strengthening social cohesion.

Once received, all comments, suggestions, questions and grievances are meticulously recorded by the Reserve staff using a Kobo Toolbox online/offline form. Subsequently, an app called OpenFN extracts this data from KoboToolbox and transfers it to Asana, a secured organization-level task management system accessible via computers and smartphones. Here, dedicated GRM staff review and categorize each submission based on its content, distinguishing among suggestions, comments, inquiries, non-rights grievances, and rights-based grievances. They then assign the appropriate individuals to address each grievance.

The use of Asana piloted by the SWM Programme in Ituri marks the first time grievance management is being standardized and digitalized in the region. This innovation streamlines the process, making it easier for field staff to respond to grievances swiftly and effectively. The use of this organizational digital tool helped improve responsiveness at the local level, ensuring all grievances are addressed promptly.

Of particular note is the automatic sharing of all human rights-related grievances with the WCS Global Social Safeguards Management Team and the WCS Office of General Council through secured Asana projects. This ensures that every submission undergoes thorough review, investigation and resolution in a manner that is respectful, credible and timely.

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 →

Submission

Submit a grievance

Submit your concern to OWR using the OWR Hotline, through email, via letter or suggestion boxes, or in person. If you feel comfortable, include your contact details so that OWR staff can follow-up with you about your submission.

Review

Grievance is classified for better handling

Your concern is categorized based on its topic. Then, it can be properly and effectively handled by the right people.

Information gathering

Information about the grievance is collected

It may be necessary to gather more information about your grievance so that the best resolution options can be made available. All information will be kept confidential and only shared, with your consent, with OWR staff trained in handling grievances.

Treatment

Resolution options discussed with you

Your submission is analyzed by an expert team of OWR staff. Every effort will be made to come up with a fair solution that all parties agree with. It is not possible to resolve all grievances, but the team will aim to provide an option that works for you.

Resolution

Implement the resolution

We work together to implement an agreed upon resolution plan. Sometimes the challenges are complex and cannot be resolved right away. Our goal is to fairly address your concern and commit to working with you on a solution.

Figure 2: The five steps in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve GRM process.
All information is kept confidential.

Since January 2023, the Ituri GRM has received over 635 submissions. The team is committed to responding to them promptly, thereby building further trust with the community, including 47 percent that are either positive feedback, primarily consisting of suggestions and comments, or requests for assistance. Over 130 ICCN and partner staff have been trained in how to implement the GRM. Moving forward, the GRM is set to be scaled up to over 100 communities within and adjacent to the OWR. This expansion aims to ensure that all ICCN and partner staff are trained in GRM protocols and procedures, thus extending the reach of this innovative mechanism to more communities and stakeholders.

Community members engaged in lengthy discussions to collaboratively design the grievance submission and resolution processes. The Democratic Republic of the Congo.
© WCS/Benjamin Mbusa

> "Today, we are sitting here resolving many cases with open discussions. As you can see, the discussions are very much confidential, and everybody is enjoying their freedom of speech. Please keep this GRM running so we can continue to exchange ideas for sustainable grievance resolution."
>
> Community representative

FIND OUT MORE

SWM Programme Factsheet - Social safeguards in Ituri

French

WCS **GRM Policy** and implementation mechanism (forthcoming)

ICCN **standard guide** to GRM in DRC protected areas

Focusing on land tenure in Papua New Guinea

The Bismarck Mountain Range, in the northeastern segment of the central highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG), turned out to be a natural laboratory to prove the efficacy of an FPIC process for community engagement on the management of natural resources.

The Indigenous Peoples in this area are the customary landowners of the forest and are almost totally dependent on garden produce, hunting and forest resources for their livelihoods. In PNG, the state recognizes the land rights of Indigenous Peoples, who have legitimate authority to manage natural resources in their territories. However, local communities that want to protect their natural resources are often not aware of the mechanisms for enforcing those rights.

Additionally, land ownership in the region is fragmented: land rights belong to different clans and families, while decisions about land happen at the level of the tribe, made up of different clans and families. In this context, building trust is essential to effective engagement with communities, and all interventions must work to gain consensus from all clans (i.e., close-knit and interrelated families) within the tribe.

Following the SWM Programme FPIC process, different clans – sharing a common geography – decided to work together to commonly regulate the use of wildlife and develop a joint land-use plan. The FPIC process made it possible to operate at a tribal level to overcome misconceptions and frictions at a family and clan level. The numerous participatory consultation meetings, involving all the community groups (e.g. youth, women's groups, village elders), as well as their administrative and political representatives (district, local government), have been key to ensuring a successful FPIC process.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AUSTRALIA

United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. [Cited 9 September 2024]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420

Participatory consultation meetings facilitated collaboration among clans for the sustainable management of natural resources and wildlife. Kwiop village, Papua New Guinea.
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The model developed by the SWM Programme conserves and revives traditional Indigenous knowledge of wildlife and land management, by recording in written form all the Indigenous land management rules. These customary practices are eventually formalized into deeds, a legally recognized sustainable management contract among landowners, that is recognized by the provincial and national government and enforceable by law.

While land tenure is recognized in the Constitution, the majority of tenure boundaries have not been demarcated. Thus, the participatory mapping of boundaries has been critical for helping to secure and protect the rights within a demarcated space. Participatory mapping of community lands also ensures that all land-use zones (e.g., agricultural plots, woodlots, multi-use forest, and protected forest) are agreed upon by landowners. Each deed specifies the rules for land use and natural resource management within community territory and makes explicit the penalties for infringement of these rules by both outsiders and community members. The deed also formally recognizes that village courts and the state have a role in adjudicating breaches of the rules, as part of the Village Courts Act and Land Disputes and Settlement Act. Each community decides the lifespan of a conservation deed, which can be renewed when it expires.

On 31 August 2021, the eight clans that comprise the community of Kwiop came together to sign the first community-level conservation deed of the Highlands, representing 892 people who traditionally own 3 500 hectares of montane rainforest. On 29 June 2022, seven clans of the Wamiufa tribe formalized in the same way their engagement to sustainably manage Mount Waugareame Conservation Area (2 603 hectares). On 4 August 2024, Indigenous landowners of the Inaugl tribe joined their neighbours in the Bismarck Forest Corridor to commit to protection and sustainable management of 12 241 hectares of forest under a conservation deed. These achievements have been a long journey, made possible with the support of several projects and donors including the SWM Programme.

The SWM Programme used the process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent to co-design all activities with clans and families and overcome the big challenge of land fragmentation.

FIND OUT MORE

News article: WCS PNG leads the first community ranger training in Kwiop and builds up the community-based organization operational capacity to protect the Mount Goplom Conservation Area **English**

News release: In Papua New Guinea, an Indigenous Tribe's Journey to Protect its Forest **English**

The participatory consultation meetings, conducted as part of the FPIC process, included representatives from all community groups, with particular emphasis on engaging youth and women's groups. Kwiop village, Papua New Guinea.
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Lessons learned

The SWM Programme community rights-based approach, alongside its suite of social safeguards tools, has been a driving force behind numerous **social innovations**. By fostering an inclusive environment that actively engages stakeholders in co-designing project activities and decision-making processes throughout the entire project lifecycle, the SWM Programme has not only strengthened trust and ownership among Indigenous Peoples and local communities but also deepened their commitment to the initiative. This participatory model ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate, contextually relevant, and firmly rooted in local priorities, thereby enhancing the long-term sustainability and impact.

While the frameworks and methodological tools were originally designed to meet compliance requirements in line with United Nations system recommendations and international legal principles and provisions, they have, within the context of the SWM Programme, evolved into **robust mechanisms for the active engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities**. Notably, these mechanisms have been particularly effective in including marginalized groups such as women and youth. By transforming compliance-oriented frameworks into participatory tools, the SWM Programme has helped involve and empower these groups. However, this approach does simultaneously require **significant investment** in staff training and the development of contextually appropriate tools.

Recognizing the critical importance of **tailored strategies**, the SWM Programme's social safeguards were carefully adapted to reflect the unique cultural, social and environmental dynamics of each site. These tools are not static and they were continuously refined based on community feedback and evolving circumstances. This ensured that they remained relevant and effective over time. In contrast, standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches frequently fail to address the nuanced needs of diverse communities and, in some cases, may exacerbate existing social inequalities or conflicts.

This case study has also highlighted the importance of **co-learning** across disciplines and backgrounds, including combining modern technologies with traditional practices. The SWM Programme experience implementing social safeguards has shown the importance of community members and programme teams learning from each other. The programme teams learned how to respect and enhance community rights, while communities were empowered to realize their own rights.

The SWM Programme follows a community rights-based approach that engages stakeholders, especially marginalized groups like women, in co-designing project activities and decision-making processes.
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The SWM Programme is a major international initiative that aims to improve the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife in forest, savannah and wetland ecosystems. It is being funded by the European Union with co-funding from the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) and the French Development Agency (AFD). Projects are being piloted and tested with governments and communities in 15 participating countries. The initiative is coordinated by a dynamic consortium of four partners, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

FIND OUT MORE

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